

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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SUBJECT: TUVALU INDEPENDENCE PROSPECTS

REF: 77 SUVA 0629

1. CHIEF MINISTER OF TAVALU, TOALUPI LAUTI, SINGLED OUT ECONOMIC AID AND CITIZENSHIP AS PRINCIPAL POINTS FOR NEGOTIATION WITH HMG DURING CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE ON TUVALUAN INDEPENDENCE, NOW UNDERWAY IN LONDON. HE CALLED ON ME ENROUTE TO MEETING.

2. CURRENTLY, ACCORDING LAUTI, UK SUPPLIES IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF A\$10 MILLION IN ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. OF THIS, A\$4.5 MILLION IS IN RESERVE FUND, A\$800,000 IS BUDGETARY SUPPORT, BALANCE IS DEVELOPMENTAL AID. PRINCIPALLY, LAUTI IS CONCERNED THAT RESERVE FUND BE MAINTAINED AND REPLENISHED AND HOPES TO OBTAIN UK PLEDGE
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TO DO SO POST INDEPENDENCE. HMG HAS PROMISED TO CONTINUE DEVELOPMENT AID FOLLOWING PROJECTED OCTOBER 1, 1978, INDEPENDENCE DATE.

3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK WITHIN WHICH TUVALU NOW GOVERNED PROVIDES FOR CITIZENSHIP BASED ON "BELONGER" STATUS. TUVALUANS QUALIFY THROUGH PROOF OF DESCENT FROM AT LEAST ONE GRANDPOARENT BORN IN TUVALU (OR ELLICE ISLANDS AS IT WAS UNTIL 203 YEARS AGO) BEFORE 1900.

LAUTI HOPES TO MAINTAIN QUALIFICATION IN NEW CONSTITUTION, FEARING TINY ISLANDS OTHERWISE WOULD BE OVERWHELMED BY FOREIGNER CLAIMING CITIZENSHIP. BRITISH WANT "BELONGER" RULES RELAXED, FEELING THEY UNFAIRLY EXCLUDE RESIDENTS OF MANY YEARS WHO FAIRLY MIGHT EXPECT TO BECOME CITIZENS ON INDEPENDENCE. BOTH SIDES AGREEABLE TO A NATURALIZATION PROVISION IN CONSTITUTION.

4. ACCORDING LAUTI, ISLANDERS HEAVILY IN FAVOR OF GOVERNOR GENERAL APPOINTED ON ADVICE PRIME MINISTER. HE WILL SUPPORT THIS ALTHOUGH HE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED ELECTED PRESIDENT AS HEAD OF STATE SINCE, AS FIRST PRIME MIN, HE COULD BE OPEN TO CHARGES OF FAVORITISM IN SMALL ISLAND SOCIETY WHEN HE RECOMMENDS ON GOV GEN APPOINTMENT.

5. LAUTI INTENDS THAT TUVALU (POP. 10,000) WILL APPLY FOR UN MEMBERSHIP AFTER INDEPENDENCE. HE HAS REACTED FAVORABLY TO HMG SUGGESTION (REFTEL) THAT TUVALU JOIN WITH OTHER MINUTE ISLAND NATIONS IN ESTABLISHING JOINT, ROTATING REPRESENTATION AT UN TO SPREAD ENORMOUS FINANCIAL BURDEN OF INDIVIDUAL MISSIONS.

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH DISAGREEMENTS MAY ARISE AT CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE ON POST-INDEPENDENCE LEVELS AND COMPOSITION OF UN AND, AND ON CITIZENSHIP ISSUE, THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT THAT CONFERENCE WILL FAIL IN VIEW CAREFUL PREPARATION AND WILL ON BOTH SIDES (PARTICULARLY UK'S) THAT INDEPENDENCE COME AS QUICKLY AND QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE. LAUTI IS PROWESTERN IN OUTLOOK, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXUDES GLOW OVER TREATMENT HE RECEIVED IN U.S. AS RECENT IV GRANTEE. WE CAN REASONABLY EXPECT HIS GOVT. ADOPT POSITIONS SYMPATHETIC OUR INTERESTS IN UN. IF ACTING IN CONCERT WITH OTHER ISLAND NATIONS WITH ROTATING UN REP., WOULD ANTICIPATE EQUALLY COOPERATIVE JOINT STANCES GIVEN LIKELY PARTNERS MENTIONED BY LAUTI, E.G. GILBERTS, SOLOMONS, NAURU. FLANEGIN

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